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**State of Vermont**  
**Vermont Department of Education**  
120 State Street  
Montpelier, VT 05620-2501

May 2, 2012

To: Superintendents  
From: Armando Vilaseca, Commissioner Department of Education  
Re: Student Educator Course Transcript data collection

Dear Superintendents,

I have received letters from two associations sharing concerns of the federal requirement to collect Student/Educator Course Transcript information. As you all know, this was a requirement that US ED expected to be completed by this past fall. However as you may also know, one of my SBE members contacted the governor about this and the governor did not want us to participate in this collection. After many discussions with both our governor's office and the US ED, it was decided that we would be provided an extension to the deadline and would complete it the following year. It is now that time.

We have previously sent out information about this data collection and even reached out to all of you seeking participants in the pilot collection of this information and only two districts volunteered. However, the ability to provide this information is not up to me or you; it is a requirement of our acceptance of Statewide Fiscal Stabilization Fund that brought \$77 million over two years and an additional \$19 million the following year from the Federal Jobs Fund Act. This money helped offset potentially devastating staffing cuts to many of our districts. Both Governor Douglas and Governor Shumlin signed this agreement and our own SBE signed on as well. Obviously, if we decide not to comply with what the federal law requires there will be consequences related to the money they gave us.

More importantly, this information is part of the new and improved accountability system we are trying to implement here in Vermont, one that will move away from using the NECAP as our sole measure of student success. This new information will also be part of the school profile that will be used as we improve our accountability models here and nationally. For example, we have a very inconsistent academic course tracking system, where what one school titles "Biology" may be entirely different from that of another school. If we ever want to be able to use local assessment measures as part of our accountability system then we need to have consistency around the state in what constitutes a particular class.

We understand that there is an amount of uncertainty that comes with any new data collection. With that in mind, we are in the process of expanding our communication efforts regarding this particular collection by creating a separate, dedicated webpage where all specifications and resources related to this collection may be found. This webpage can be accessed here: [http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/pgm\\_IT/sect.html](http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/pgm_IT/sect.html). Additionally, I will be sending all superintendents a Flip video further detailing the importance of meeting this requirement.



While the data collection application that will be used for final submission is not currently available, the bulk of the effort related to this reporting, namely course mapping, can and should be completed ahead of time. Please contact our Help Desk at the number listed below for guidance and resources on how to get started in this process.

We are more than willing to offer technical support regarding questions about file specifications and the transmission of data files but cannot help in the actual course mapping determinations. These determinations need to be made by district subject matter experts. Understandably, the first year will be the most challenging. You were advised of this requirement last year and again in a memo from me dated March 13<sup>th</sup>. With the data collection due on **August 15<sup>th</sup>**, school districts have had at least 12 weeks with school still in session, to begin work on this. As a former principal and superintendent, I believe this is sufficient time to complete this requirement, or at least to make substantial progress.

Since VT has already been given a yearlong extension on this requirement, it is unclear what the specific consequences will be for us if districts do not comply with this pre-funded mandate. We received a letter from US ED where it is stated: "The U.S. Department of Education expects all States to comply with these SFSF program requirements. If a State fails to do so, the Department intends to take actions against it consistent with the enforcement provisions of the General Education Provisions Act (20 USC 1234 et seq.). Such actions could include the recovery of funds (20 USC 1234a) or the withholding of funds (20 USC 1234d). In addition, a State's failure to comply with SFSF requirements could have repercussions under other Federal education programs." I hope that districts will do their best to complete the data collection and that we will not need to address either the recovery or the withholding of funds. Please do not hesitate to contact our office if you need technical support while working on this information. The Help Desk can be reached at 802-828-3777.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Armando Vilaseca".

Armando Vilaseca  
Commissioner